

BEDFORD STREET.

As It Was, and As It Is.

The Lower Strata of Humanity in Great Cities.

THE BUMMER'S RESTAURANT

The Shanty—The Cellar—The Groggery.

THE PEOPLE WHO DWELL THEREIN

The Bedford Street Mission and Its Work.

Etc., Etc., Etc., Etc., Etc., Etc.

In all great cities, and indeed in all places where a great number of people are congregated together, there is a class that seems to fall into the lowest depths, as sand falls to the bottom of water. They seem to get there at once, and never to make any exertion to rise again. The whole end and aim of their existence are comprised in the gratification of their lowest animal desires and appetites. Degraded in appearance, they shun the light of day, and keep within their burrows. Stunted in their moral growth, there are none of the better, loftier impulses of humanity that should actuate the creature moulded after God's own image. As we think of their condition—as it is now at this very moment, as it has been for generations, and as it will be for generations to come, unless new and more powerful measures are resorted to to cleanse them from their moral degradation—we feel sad when reflecting on the depths to which poor human nature can sink. And yet there are few comparatively who are aware of the immense amount of filth, squalor, disease, and all manner of wretchedness that exists amongst the lower strata that herds in our midst.

Perhaps our readers have read the description of the lower classes of London as portrayed in the English periodicals from time to time, or as more vividly described in Victor Hugo's celebrated "Misérables." But terrible as is the misery there described, wretched as the poor creatures are said to be, even these descriptions do not give all the details of the frightful picture. We remember reading once a description of a place in London, called Bedford street. It told how the houses in that place were packed with its miserable humanity—of rooms reeking with filth, foul with exhalations from the bodies of its inmates, and from the rotting walls sheltering men, women, and children, huddled together indiscriminately. Sometimes there were four or five families in one wretched room, which was at once their sleeping, eating, and sitting-room. There were none of these kindly feelings that so enable the mind and the heart; there were none of those household virtues that alone can give happiness to man. But living like beasts, shunning the sight of all that was pure and heavenly, retiring within the shadow of their abodes as the beasts, these wretched beings lived on in their misery and degradation. In reading the description of these horrible localities in the old cities, we would be apt to exclaim:—"Thank God, we have no such places!" But how idle is the boast may be very easily shown by taking a stroll into the lower quarters of any of our great cities. Only a few years back New York had one locality that was celebrated for its squalor, filth, and misery. Who has not heard of the "Five Points" and the "Old Brewery"? Artists have made studies of its ancient-looking, decayed, and tumble-down shanties, with its crowded tenement-houses, swarming with human beings and vermin of all kinds—crowded with those poor wretches whom poverty compels to crawl for shelter under the leaky roof, and in rooms where the old battered windows could not boast of a glass, where furniture was a luxury unattainable, and where the cold crust of bread or the rejected bone was ravenously devoured by the aid of fingers and teeth. Rooms that in the hot summer months were swarming with flies, roaches, and all manner of vermin, whilst decaying vegetable matter and filth bred disease with every breath; where in winter the howling storm swept with unresisted force through the broken doorway and the unglazed window, and through the wide gaping cracks in the shanty itself, that have not been closed with old paper and rags. There through the day might be seen poverty and misery stalking around with pallid features and skeleton-like forms. There through the night crime and all manner of iniquity were carried on in the most daring and God-defying manner. The sounds of debauchery, drunkenness, and blasphemy rang their discordant notes on the air through the horrid nights until the dissipated wretches ceased from exhaustion and dropped off into their drunken sleep. Such was "Five Points"—such is

Bedford Street
Even now, much as has been done for it by the Mission, which is even now striving to still further improve the street and its environs. Who that picks up the daily papers does not see the name of this notorious and terrible locality. All manner of crimes that are known in the laws used to be committed within its unglazed precincts, and even now it is a sad spectacle. And yet, much as has been said of it—much as has been written about it—it is comparatively an unknown region to thousands of our citizens. The father of a family, as he sits down to his morning paper, with his happy children and wife around him, and shudderingly glances over an account of some terrible crime or outrage that has been committed within the limits of Bedford street, can form no idea of its miseries. Not even from the finely portrayed descriptions of Charles Dickens, or the powerful writings of Victor Hugo, can the mind form a proper idea of what is to be seen in the lower

haunts of the miserably poor and depraved wretches who exist in such horrible places. There are some things which must be seen to be thoroughly understood. With such feelings as these we started on a tour through Bedford street, and much as we thought we were prepared for what we were to see, yet we found that all our ideas of the place fell far short of the reality. The street itself runs east and west, between Fifth and Eighth streets, and between Shippen and South streets. One morning we started out to make a tour through the place, by invitation of the Mission, Rev. Mr. Long. It was a bracing, cool morning in October, and the sun shone clear and bright. As we approached the street, we soon began to see its influence in the people that issued from it. We reached the place, and turned towards the Mission, which is situated between Sixth and Seventh streets, on the north side. It was a plain, unpretending structure, three stories in height. Finding Mr. Long at his post, we soon got ready and made a start. A few steps brought us to a rickety tumble-down looking frame shanty, whose rotten superstructure seemed to lean over with more of an inclination than the celebrated tower of Pisa. The windows—which once, perhaps, had panes of glass in them—exhibited a mass of rags and old paper that served to keep out the rain and wind. No curtains were there, and the broken shutters were closed with a bar and padlock. The roof broken, and covered with masses of moss that still looked fresh and green, although it covered decay and corruption, and the tumble-down chimneys, completed the outside picture. No, not quite, either. On one side of a cellar door sat two negro women. They were dirty and slovenly. On their heads were ragged, greasy, and filthy handkerchiefs that had once been of gay colors. A mass of filthy rags covered their attenuated figures, whilst their sharp visages and bleared eyes gave a wicked look to their features as they sat huddled up resting their chins on their hands, and looking up at us from under their eyebrows. Says Mr. Long to them, "You live down the cellar, don't you?" One of the women replied in an indignant manner, and with a flourish of her hand, "No, I don't live down there; I live in Spaford street, I does;" and then got up, and, with a series of grunts, waddled off to her proper domicile. The other negro said, in a sort of half-shamed, half-defiant manner, "I live there, right down there," pointing, at the same time, with her skinny finger into the cellar. We looked down where she pointed, and instinctively shuddered at the wretched sight. The bottom of the cellar must have been of black mud. Over the mud were laid boards, and between these the black, foul mud had oozed up, and was spreading over the scanty flooring, which was already covered with some half an inch of black filth. Around the walls of the cellar were begrimed with smoke and dirt. There was not a single article of furniture, not even a bench, visible. "And yet," says Mr. Long, "in that miserable place will probably a score of homeless tramps and thieves be huddled together, and sleep on the clothes they have on, and sleep like many beasts. There, with the foul black ooze clinging to their rags, will they drag out the weary night hours, to disperse during the day through the city, stealing, begging, and carrying disease wherever they go." The upper room was almost as wretched as the cellar. On the blackened, discolored walls, that had here and there a ragged shred of wall paper clinging to it, and through the battered plaster, by which the laths and scannings were exposed, hung ragged and tattered garments. A many-looking dog lay down before an old stove that still contained some embers of a fire almost out; two or three chairs, a three-legged table, and some few articles of kitchen use strewn about, completed the picture, as far as furniture went. There were no carpets of any kind, and the place seemed alive with vermin. From it there issued a noisome stench that spoke in volumes of disease and pestilence. The inmates, some half-a-dozen in number, were all bleared-eyed, unkempt, unshaven men, with nothing on but ragged breeches, a dirty shirt, and worn-out, rough boots, lounged around with pipes in their mouths, cursing the women and children who were huddled together in one corner. It was a sad picture, but there were far worse ones.

The Tramp's Restaurant.
At one corner we stopped to look into a provision shop and tramp's restaurant. There were plates of bones and broken meat, crusts of bread, and parts of potatoes in heaps and piles that would hardly be inviting to a hungry dog. They were piled on the reeking counters. The marks of teeth could be seen in many of the unwholesome viands that were exposed to view. On the shelves of this store were lots of rancid ham and decayed vegetables. The smell of putrefying meat, bad tobacco, and rotting vegetable matter was almost enough to drive one backward; and yet these dens are well patronized by the tramps and thieves, who pay ten cents per plate for the victuals that even a well-to-do dog would turn from in disgust. Such a luxury as a knife and fork, in such a place, is a rarity; and fingers and teeth take their place with wonderful success, judging from the way in which the foul viands disappear. The shops are constantly replenished with the stores obtained from the beggars, who bring the contents of their bags and baskets, mixed with cigar stumps, "old sogers," and dirt of all descriptions. It is well the hungry tramp and ravenous bum have no fastidious appetite, or their leather-lined stomachs would reject the filthy scraps. Around the walls are hung dried-up and mouldy links of Bologna, and sickly looking meat that evidently never came under the hands of the butcher. In these places, at the meal hours, can be seen the aged and palsied, the ragged and forlorn, devouring with hungry greed their rations.

After taking a hasty glance into the "restaurant," we moved on. The foul exhalations from the street, and the bursts of murky, pestilential vapors that issued from the opened doorways almost made us think of giving up our inspection. But we plodded on, and stopped opposite one of the "blums," or alley ways. It had once been paved. But the bricks were broken, and had been forced into the blackened mud, and we had to pick our way daintily over the treacherous ground, through the dark and noisome passage. We emerged into a back yard. Before us was a collection of frame and mud shanties, none of them more than two stories, and most of them only one-story. To

describe any one of them would be an almost impossible task. In some of them two and three families were huddled together in one room, which was at once sitting-room, eating room, sleeping-room, and kitchen. Here is where the cholera started, says our companion. We look around, and wonder that it had not started sooner, and with more deadly power. The vegetable refuse and kitchen offal of all descriptions were heaped with piles of ashes. From the offensive heaps the morning sun raised vapory clouds of pestilential miasma that spoke plainly of disease and death. Around us were half-naked groups of poor creatures, who seemed to wonder what brought us to such a place. We could hear deep muttered curses and imprecations from the rufinously looking men, who imagined that we were there for no good to them.

Says our companion:—"You see these miserable Lovels. Well, as a paying investment, there is no speculation that is better than to build, and in a just such places as these. There is a house (pointing to a one-story mud-hut) that would probably not cost over \$30 to put up, and yet it brings not less than \$120 to \$150 a year. And yet these places are owned by men whom society looks up to as wealthy and upright citizens—men who would not venture within the unhalloved precincts of their own possessions, but who think it no harm to own them, and get an income from them through their less scrupulous agents."

We stopped at a dilapidated doorway that led into a narrow entry. A short flight of rotten and rickety stairs led the way to the upper story. In that place, on a Saturday night especially, could be seen crowds of thieves, pickpockets, bummers, and tramps of all descriptions. At night every available spot is taken up by the lodgers, who, for ten cents, have the shelter of its walls for a few hours. No bedding of any kind is furnished. Down on the bare floor, with no other covering than the rags that cover them, lie these miserable wretches. In one mass they lie, regardless of age or sex. On any clear night there are numbers of the vilest of both sexes who congregate and lie around like brutes. Humanity shudders and sinks abashed at the horrible debaucheries and lasciviousness that the pen refuses to picture, and the mind cannot conceive of unless it were seen.

On our way out of the "blum" we stopped at the open doorway of a room that opened into it. There an old, wrinkled-looking hag lived with her three daughters. The latter were from fifteen to eighteen years old, we were told, but to our eyes their ages were a mystery. Dissipation, want, and misery had so changed and warped their features that there was little of humanity in them. They looked at us with hollow, glazed eyes, and a stolid, listless expression on their sallow faces that seemed to say a smile was never to illumine them in this life. Stunted in growth, mentally deformed, and old before their time, they were the victims of the crime and penalty of her who ought to have been their guide and protector under God—their mother. Prostituted for gain in their earliest years, these poor creatures, in the meaning of virtue and honor, unless perchance, a "blissful" thought would flash through their dwarfed minds, as the glorious sun or the starry heavens would, for a passing moment, arrest their attention. We emerged from that alley feeling doubly sad at what we had seen, and proceeded through Bedford street again.

There were numbers of children thronging around. And oh, what a spectacle! Not happy childhood, with its many pranks and gleeful laugh, but old faces on young shoulders. Perhaps a smile would linger for a moment on their poor attenuated features as a kind word was spoken to them. Our friend, the Missionary, would always have a pleasant word for them, and would inquire why they were not at the Mission School. Some of them would say they had to go out and earn something for their parents to buy bread with, and others would give somewhat similar reasons for non-attendance. As we went along the street there was one particular group that arrested our attention. Some seven individuals, equally divided as to sex and color, were lying huddled together on a cellar door. Two of the men had black stumps of pipes in their mouths, and so also had an old, ill-looking negro. Although the morning was pretty well advanced, they still slumbered on, smoking and snoring in their troubled rest. Not one of them but would have made a study for a painter. Their dilapidated garments, reeking with grease and dirt, scarcely covering their nakedness; the pallid, vicious looks, the begrimed faces and tangled hair and beards of the different members of the group, made a sad picture. And see, one brutal fellow quarrels with one of the wretched females, and raises his fist and strikes her! For a few seconds there is a wrangle, and then they relapse into their old stolid condition. This is a common picture, and not as bad as some that are daily and hourly to be seen at any place in the whole street.

A Bedford Street Groggery
is the lowest place that the mind can conceive of. A low, dark room, into which the light of heaven only enters through the battered doorway. We enter, and what a sight meets our eyes—a mingled mass of bestialized humanity! There are no other pieces of furniture but two or three rough chairs, and some barrels labelled "Old Rye," "Gin," and "Rum," several bottles of the fiery poison on a dirty shelf, and a half-dozen green glass tumblers. Behind an old rough pine counter, out and laced by a generation of loafers and bummers, stands a fat, unwieldy woman, whose low brow, coarse face, and Titanic limbs give evidence of tremendous muscular power, while the glare of her red clear eyes give evidence of her willingness to use it. The chief objects of interest, however, are the miscellaneous groupings of men, women, children, hogs, and dogs that throng the hell. Here may be seen placards announcing dog-fights, rat-fights, and all manner of bestial amusements. Here may be seen the rum-soaked bummer and sot sinking, a mass of filth and disease, upon the rotten floor, whilst around him roots a family of pigs, or above his head a dog-fight is going on. And see the wretched customer as he steps into the vile place to get his glass of lightning! His bloated face fiery with the potency of the draughts of liquid poison; the eyes red, blood-shot, and bleared; the uncombed hair and shaking, trembling limbs all go to make up a terrible picture that is a common—alas! how very common!—spectacle. And even he is not the most saddening picture. Imagine a poor, degraded woman—

one of that sex whom we look up to as purer and better in all her impulses than we—fallen, fallen below the beast! A woman, whose sense of shame and self-respect are totally gone, whose only thought is how to obtain her daily grog. See her come into the vile den, and swallow the deadly poisonous liquor that burns her throat with its fiery strength. She staggers out with unsteady steps, muttering curses and maledictions upon all who stand in her way. Small children obtain draughts of rum and gin, and stagger and stagger in imitation of their older companions in vice and debauchery. To see these hells all their worst aspect, one should pay them a visit about the hours of ten and eleven at night. Then they swarm with besotted creatures of both sexes and all ages and colors. Then can be heard the coarse oaths and blasphemies and ribald jests—the fierce laugh of the cutthroat villain and the shrieks of some poor wretched being who is suffering under the hand of some merciless beast. There, lying prone on the floor, can be seen the fallen sot, lying in the disgusting filth, and unconscious in his drunken sleep. Around are groups playing with dirty, well-thumbed cards, or throwing dice.

But enough of such a picture; and even that is not half as horrible as the reality. Indeed, to do justice to such a subject would exhaust all the words of abhorrence and detestation in the language. We can only pretend to describe a very small portion of what can be seen at any time.

Curiously Seekers
used occasionally to meet with rather rough treatment from the denizens of this benighted region. The Missionary told me of one case in particular. A man in very respectable circumstances thought he would like to see some of the carryings-on in the lower dens of the street. One bitter cold night in the winter he set out on his travels in search of the elephant. He stopped in front of a cellar, attracted by the sounds of a furious merriment within. He entered. The crowd of women who filled the cellar instantly stopped their dancing and ribaldry, and the old cracked violin, which was played by a one-eyed darkey, also stopped. The women gathered around him, and, alarmed, he attempted to retire. But they barred his way out, and, seizing him, amidst curses and yells of ribaldry, they took from him his coat, his vest, his pants, his boots and stockings, his underclothing, and, in fact, every stitch he had on, in spite of his frenzied yells and struggles. They then put on him an old, dirty, ragged shirt and pair of drawers. In this state they thrust him out of the cellar. As he emerged, a policeman met him, but he begged off, and started for home at the top of his speed, reaching there a wiser man in some respects than he was before. The foregoing is but one case of a hundred similar ones.

The Mission.
which was organized in 1853, by members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, has effected a great change in the character of the street and its environs. Formerly no one might enter its precincts with impunity, if he ventured to stir. To be there was to render oneself a prey to murder, robbery, and every other crime. The sounds of drunken quarrels and howling imprecations filled the air from early morning until the drunken wretches fell into their bestial and besotted slumbers. When the Mission was first started, even the ministers of the Gospel could not get entrance within its pale to address the benighted people. They were assailed with sticks and stones and mud, and dead animals were hurled at them, whilst besotted men and women would howl out curses and imprecations, so as to render it impossible to be heard. Satan seemed to lead, and devilishness reigned triumphant. We will give the experience of one day, as related by the Missionary, Rev. Benjamin T. Sewell, in his interesting work on Bedford street. He says:—"My reception in Bedford street the first Sabbath was anything but flattering. After giving out and, with the aid of the brethren around me, singing a hymn, I commenced praying, but I had scarcely begun when a scene occurred which completely spoiled this part of the exercises. Some one having taken a large dog from his home in the vicinity of our meeting, had tied an old wash-kettle to his tail, and then started him home again. On he came with railroad speed. On, too, came the crowd close on the heels of the dog—men, women, boys, and girls, all eager to see the fun, and with their yelling, shouting, hurraing, whistling, jumping, stamping, laughing, etc., making the welkin ring."

Through such discouragements the Mission has pursued its unswerving course upward and onward. Its great adversary is intemperance. It is not confined to the men, but even the women and children are frequently under its influence. Some there are whose sensual appetites, once formed to the taste of liquor, not even the fear of death can induce to abandon their rum and gin. When taken down by disease, no inducement can be powerful enough to make them leave off taking a "drap of the crater."

We will here make another extract from Mr. Sewell's work. It is the description of a single room and its inmates:—
"There are no chairs in the room, and a seat on the floor would not be so comfortable, for it looks as if it had not been cleaned since it was done four years ago by order of the Board of Health. But here is a rickety stair-way leading to the attic, but that is occupied by other families. Just stand where you are, and you will see enough to show that Katy's home is not the most comfortable imaginable. Here is a drunken woman to commence with, a young woman who, three years ago, moved in respectable society. But, alas! how fallen and degraded now!
"And here is another, an old offender, whose bloated face and blackened eyes and ragged-covered body indicate the depth of infamy to which she is sunk, for rum and rags go hand in hand. The one destroys all virtue, the other takes away all self-respect, while both unite in excluding the unfortunate victim from all honored and honorable associations."
"But here is another, hid away in the corner, who has still some sense of shame left. She is the mother of three beautiful children, from whom she has been enticed by the demon of rum. Poor woman! she has been wandering about from one grog-shop to another, dinking penny-a-glass whiskey, till she is well nigh ruined."
"And here, too, are two ragged colored men. Don't be alarmed and scold because of the unnatural amputation here exhibited. It is a common thing in this locality. Rum has made it so."
"In that place were three little girls and a bright boy, who had all learned the use of intoxicating liquors, and had acquired a taste for them."

The above description is not an unusual one. The curious reader can see the same thing in scores of places and at any time. The whole street teems with such.

What the Mission Has Done
is only to be appreciated by those who have seen it in the days when it was first established, and who know its record. There is many a reclaimed drunkard, many a reformed wretch who bartered her greatest earthly jewel for a mess of pottage, and many a happy child, who has been rescued from the paths of crime and from the sinks of iniquity which so abound in this frightful locality. It has carried comfort to the dying hours of many a poor despairing wretch, whose guilty soul shuddered, ere it took its flight from its earthly sepulchre, at the enormity of its guilt. It has carried comfort to the sick and weary and food to the starving. It has given instruction to the ignorant and stood the friend of the friendless. All honor to these noble men, who, in the midst of famine and desolation, drunkenness and debauchery, surrounded by sin and crime in all its abhorrent nakedness, have manfully done their duty in reclaiming the fallen of their race! It is a God-like service, and well have they earned the appreciative plaudits of all. They are engaged in a work that should stir the hearts of all to come forward and aid them with deeds of kindness and gifts of benevolence.

The Mission Building,
wherein the schools are situated, is a neat but unpretending three-story brick structure. On the first floor, as you enter, is the chapel, which is capable of comfortably seating about two hundred people. On the second floor is the infant school-room. We paid the children a visit. Mrs. O—, the very kind and ladylike teacher, had the little scholars, who are of both sexes and colors, in very good order. Indeed, there are very few schools in which such excellent discipline is kept as it was in that room. They were all orderly, and had clean faces and hands and their hair combed. They sang a hymn, called "The Harvester's Hymn," we believe, and accompanied their singing with appropriate gestures at the lead of their teacher. After saying a few words to the children, we visited the third story, where the older scholars are taught. Miss I— and Miss R—, the two lady teachers of this department, were very kind in explaining the rules of the school to us. We heard the children repeat the Lord's Prayer in a very creditable manner, and after saying a few words before leaving, we retired very much pleased with the pleasant faces we saw there, and thankful that so many children were being so well cared for.

The financial condition of the Mission is not in a very flourishing state. In this connection we will make an extract from the thirteenth annual report, for the year 1866:—

"Financially, the Mission has not prospered during the year as we desired it should. The school fund has suffered less than the current expense account. We are still short to meet outstanding obligations. Our cherished project of extension has consequently been retarded, but by no means abandoned. The property has been secured through to South street on favorable terms, and we are ready to go to work. We need the means with which to erect a building suited to our wants. We require ten thousand dollars, and for it are dependent upon a Christian public."

No one who has not seen the misery and degradation of the poor fallen wretches who live, or rather exist, in this wretched locality, can conceive of the immense work that is to be done in reclaiming them and reforming them, so as to be useful members of society. And it is a duty we owe not only to our God, but to society at large, as a measure of policy, if for no other reason, that that hot-bed of vice and crime should be purified and rendered a blessing, instead of a curse, as it now is. It is, as a mere matter of dollars and cents, expedient to aid the Mission in preventing the still further spread of the crime and disease that issue from its midst.

NEW ROUTE

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Via the Delaware Railroad Line.

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Willam Lovitt enters b. h. Trenton no. 8. A. Douglas-Willam Lovitt enters b. h. Trenton no. 8. A. Douglas-Willam Lovitt enters b. h. Trenton no. 8. A. Douglas-Willam Lovitt enters b. h. Trenton no. 8. A. Douglas-

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